

AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (AFSOF) COMMAND, CONTROL, AND ORGANIZATION

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[AFSOF](#) are presented to the Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC) through a Secretary of Defense (SecDef) deployment order in coordination with and at the direction of US Special Operations Command, as the US joint force provider for [special operations forces](#) (SOF).

Command and Control of AFSOF in Theater

[Command and control](#) (C2) of SOF is normally executed within a SOF chain of command. The C2 structure for SOF depends on objectives, security requirements, and the operational environment.

Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC).

USSOCOM exercises COCOM authority over TSOCs for organize, train, and equip responsibilities. The TSOC plans and conducts campaigns in support of the GCC across the [range of military operations](#). The GCC exercises [operational control](#) (OPCON) of SOF through the TSOC Commander. The TSOC Commander has two primary roles. As commander of a sub-unified command, the TSOC Commander is a JFC. As such, he has the authority to plan and conduct joint operations as directed by the GCC. Secondly, the TSOC Commander advises the GCC, Service component commanders, and others on the proper employment of SOF.

Special Operations Command-Forward (SOC-FWD).

The GCC normally exercises OPCON of attached SOF through the CDRTSOC, who may exercise OPCON of subordinate forces directly from the TSOC location, or through a smaller special operations command forward. A SOC-FWD is a tailored, operational-level HQ that provides a forward-deployed, persistent presence, C2 capability. If conditions warrant a more robust SOF presence and engagement, a SOC-FWD can transition to a JSOTF or SOJTF. The SOC-FWD develops a close working relationship with the associated country team, HN forces, and any multinational forces or intergovernmental organizations within the host nation, and helps the CDRTSOC in his role as JFC/CDRJSOTF, and as the senior theater special operations advisor to the

GCC. For military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence operations, forward-based and distributed nodes under the OPCON of the CDRTSOC provide C2 for SOF. For more information on SOF C2, see [Joint Publication 3-05, Special Operations](#).

Joint Forces Special Operations Component Commander (JFSOCC).

When established, the JFSOCC is the commander within a [joint operations area](#) (JOA) responsible to the establishing commander for execution of SOF missions. The JFSOCC is equivalent to the other joint functional component commanders such as the [joint force air component commander](#) (JFACC). The JFSOCC will normally be designated when one or more functional components are established and there are sufficient SOF in the JOA to execute SO. See Figure titled *Notional Theater Command Structure*.

Special Operations Joint Task Force (SOJTF).

The primary joint SOF organization tasked to meet special operations requirements in major operations, campaigns, or a contingency. A SOJTF is a modular, tailorable, and scalable SOF organization. The SOJTF may be directed to serve as the joint task force (JTF), or JFSOCC. The SOJTF may have one or more JSOTFs.

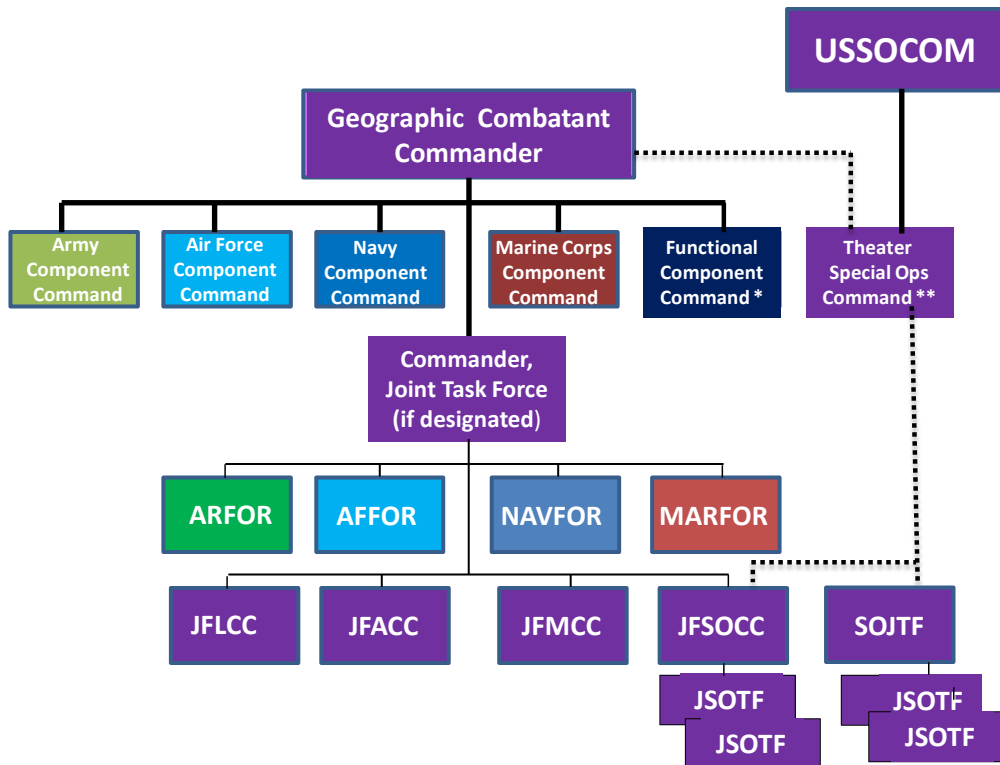
Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF).

The JSOTF is an interim entity, designed to perform a specific mission. A JTF composed of SO units from more than one Service that is formed to carry out specific SO or prosecute SO in support of a theater campaign or other operations. A JSOTF may have conventional units assigned, attached, or made available for tasking to support specific missions.

Joint Special Operations Air Component (JSOAC).

A JSOAC is a scalable, tailorable organization responsible for the centralized planning, direction, and execution of joint special operations (SO) and conventional air activities in support of special operations. The JSOAC may provide aviation support to multiple SOF organizations across a theater. The JSOAC collectively refers to the commander and staff of a SO functional air component of a TSOC. To preserve unity of command and enable the most effective use of limited SO aviation assets, AFSoF (including special tactics and aviation FID) are normally placed under the OPCON of a JSOAC Commander (JSOACC). The JSOACC will normally be the commander with the preponderance of SO related assets and has the ability to plan, coordinate, allocate, task, control, and support the assigned/supporting air assets. See figure titled, *Notional SOF Air Component*.

Notional Theater Command Structure



* Functional component commanders report to the establishing JFC (GCC or CJTF).

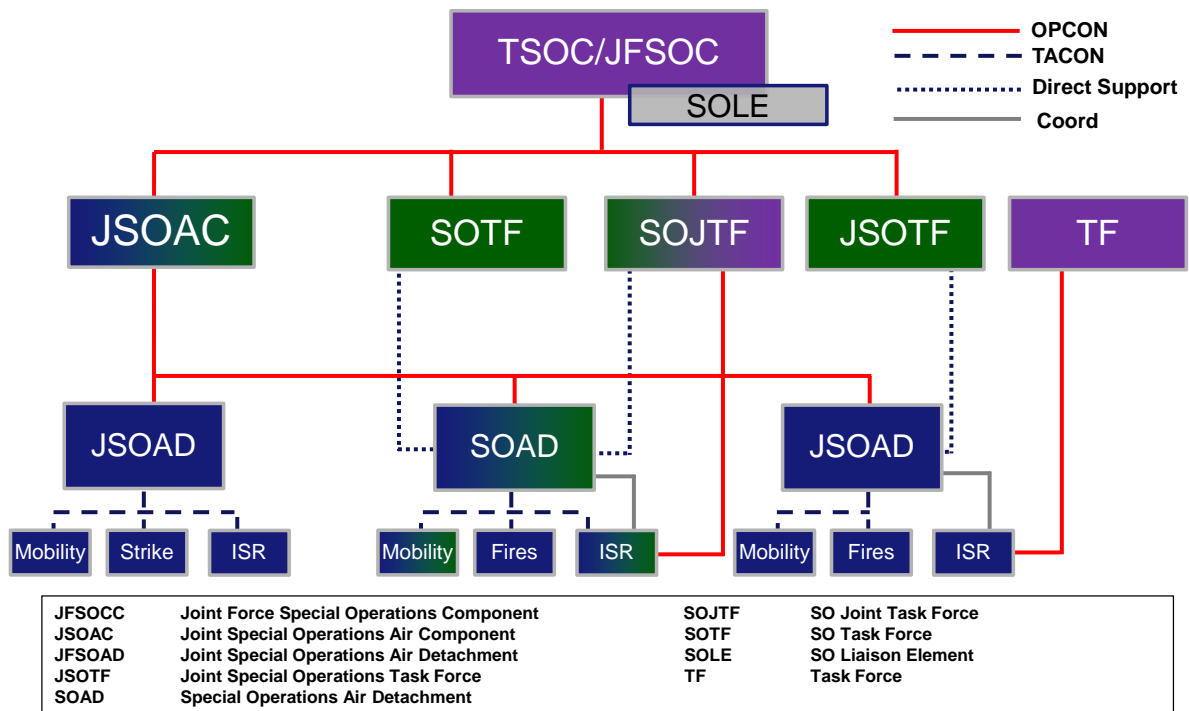
** CDRTSOC may also function as a JFSOCC and/or Commander, SOJTF, or JSOTF, if established

Legend

AFFOR	Air Force Forces
ARFOR	Army forces
CDRTSOC	commander, theaters special operations command
CJTF	commander, joint task force
GCC	geographic combatant commander
JFACC	joint force air component commander
JFC	joint force commander
JFLCC	joint force land component commander
JFMCCC	joint force maritime component commander
JFSOCC	joint force special operations component commander
JSOTF	joint special operations task force
MARFOR	Marine Corps forces
NAVFOR	Navy forces
SOJTF	special operations joint task force

—————	Combatant command (command authority)
- - - - -	Operational control
—————	As designated

Notional Theater Command Structure



Notional SOF Air Component

Commander, Air Force Special Operations Air Component (COMAFSOAC).

The COMAFSOAC is normally designated the JSOACC. The dual hatted COMAFSOAC/JSOACC normally exercises OPCON over assigned forces and TACON over aviation forces made available for tasking. Support relationships are specified as required. Unlike the command relationships for a JFACC which is normally limited to TACON, the JSOACC is normally delegated OPCON over all SOF aviation forces regardless of Service. Specified elements of administrative control (ADCON) over AF-SOF are exercised by the forward deployed COMAFSOAC; remaining ADCON elements are retained by Commander, Air Force Special Operations Command.

Special Operations Liaison Element (SOLE).

The [SOLE](#) is the JFSOCC/TSOC liaison to the JFACC. The SOLE is a joint SOF team provided to coordinate, deconflict, and synchronize SO air, surface, and subsurface operations with conventional air operations. The SOLE director has no command authority for mission tasking, planning, or execution. The SOLE normally provides the following key functions:

- ★ Harmonizes JFSOCC strategy and targets with JFACC's intent and vision via liaison with the air operations center (AOC) strategy division.

- ★ Injects all SOF requirements (to include ground and naval SOF contingents) within the JFACC's master air attack plan via close coordination in the AOC's combat plans division.
- ★ Facilitates all JFSOCC inputs into the ACO, ATO, and special instructions "SPINS" with the combat plans division.
- ★ Provides updates for situational awareness to the AOC's combat operations division in order to coordinate [close air support](#) (CAS) and request immediate support for time-sensitive targets.
- ★ Monitors and deconflicts SOF activities and locations to prevent fratricide.
- ★ Coordinates real-time [intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance](#) requirements for the JFSOCC.
- ★ Synchronizes SOF personnel recovery activities with the joint personnel recovery center.
- ★ Coordinates SOF component space requirements with the JFACC when the JFACC is designated the [space coordinating authority](#).
- ★ Coordinates and monitors SOF support of conventional units and operations (e.g., AC-130 gunships conducting CAS in support of non-SOF units).
- ★ Provides additional deconfliction between SOF and other aircraft to include unmanned aircraft during theater air operations.

JFACC Support to SOF

On occasion, SOF require JFACC support. For example, the JFACC can reduce risk to SOF mission success by providing air superiority in the joint special operations area (JSOA). By gaining and maintaining freedom of movement/freedom from attack, the JFACC provides an umbrella of protection that facilitates and enables the success of SOF missions. This support requires detailed integration and is normally coordinated through the SOLE. Creating and maintaining habitual relationships with the JFACC best facilitates this integration. When CF are tasked to support SOF performing JFSOCC missions, the JSOACC should exercise TACON of CF requiring detailed integration or participation in SOF missions (provided he has the C2 capability). Another notable example of support to SOF is the JFACC's CAS to SOF surface elements. There were numerous examples during Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM when the JFACC provided CAS to SOF teams engaged with enemy forces.

NOTIONAL SPECIAL OPERATIONS LIAISON ELEMENT FUNCTIONS

SOLE Director: Liaison to JFACC

Strategy Division

- Coordinates and synchronizes SO strategy and targets with other components to meet combatant commander objectives and guidance.
- Nominate SOF targets for inclusion in the joint integrated prioritized target list.
- Provides SOF input for JFC apportionment recommendation decisions.

Combat Plans Division

- Coordinates SOF air requirements within the master air attack plan.
- Coordinates with JSOTF/JSOAC on ATO inputs and ensures distributed ATOs are merged with the master ATO.
- Provides SO input for inclusion in SPINS.
- Coordinates airspace requirements and deconfliction for future operations.
- Represents the SO components on the targeting effects team in the JAOC.

Combat Operations Division

- Monitors and coordinates current day flying operations with other components.
- Deconflicts ongoing SO surface operations in real time with other components.
- Maintains updated list of team locations for deconfliction.
- Coordinates support for and prosecution of SOF-monitored targets to include time-sensitive targets.
- Coordinates airspace management with JAOC airspace manager.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Division

- Coordinates ISR requirements for SOF in the field.
- Provides intelligence support for combat plans and operations division.

Other Coordination

- Coordinates requirements for airfield surveys supporting force basing (AMD).
- Coordinates JTAC support for SOF when required.
- Coordinates logistic requirements including supply, transportation, and contracting (AMD).
- Coordinates communications requirements, as necessary, for SOF in the field (communications representative).
- Coordinates with JPRC.

LEGEND

AMD	air mobility division	JSOAC	joint special operations air component
ATO	air tasking order	JSOTF	joint special operations task force
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance	JTAC	joint terminal attack controller
JAOC	joint air operations center	SO	special operations
JFACC	joint force air component commander	SOF	special operations forces
JFC	joint force commander	SOLE	special operations liaison element
JPRC	joint personnel recovery center	SPINS	special instructions

Notional Special Operations Liaison Element Functions

SOF Support to the JFACC

Reciprocating JFACC support to SOF missions, the SO component may provide support or enable JFACC tasking and priorities. Historical documentation of SOF

exploits during Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM offer a more detailed example of SOF support to the JFACC.

For example, during operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, AFSOF Special Tactics teams leveraged air-power by providing accurate targeting and weather data, enabling the dismantling of the Taliban and Iraqi warfighting capability.

SOF and JFACC mutual support

At times general purpose force (GPF) air advisors and SOF [combat aviation advisors](#) (CAA) will work together as a combined air advising team, with GPF air advisors augmenting SOF CAA teams and vice versa. For example, GPF agile combat support personnel could support a SOF CAA team, or SOF CAAs with expertise in a specific foreign aircraft could support a GPF mobility advising team.

During Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, AFSOF STT members assisted anti-Taliban Forces in Afghanistan. STTs and JTACs coordinated CAS that enabled the fall of the Taliban with a minimum commitment of US and coalition ground forces.



Organization of Expeditionary Air Force Special Operations Forces

Due to its relationship with USSOCOM, AFSOF presents forces differently than conventional Air Force forces. See [AFI 10-410, Operations Planning: Presentation of AF Special Operations Forces](#). In addition to expeditionary wings, groups, and squadrons, the Air Force can deploy elements below the squadron level for specific, limited functions. These include individuals and specialty teams such as Special Tactics, CAA, and combat support. They may deploy independently of other Air Force units, often to remote locations, and may operate directly with other Services. Examples of such deployed elements include augmentation to a [joint military information support task force](#) or Special Tactics personnel supporting a contingency response group.
